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A
T R E A T I S E
EXPLANATORY OF THE
NATURE and PROPERTIES
O F
Polla plafiasmos;
O R,
THE ORIGINAL INVENTION

O F
Multiplying PICTURES in Oil Colours, with
all the PROPERTIES of the ORIGINAL
PAINTINGS; whether in regard to Out-
line, Size, Variety of Tints, &c.

TOGETHER WITH A
P R O P O S A L
F O R

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Subjects.

INTERSPERSED WITH
Occasional Remarks on the Utility of PAINTING—on
the modern Improvements in that ART,—and on
the Merits of the ENGLISH SCHOOL.

Magna est Veritas, et prevalebit.

By J. B O O T H.

A SPECIMEN of this Art may be now inspected at
the INVENTOR's House, No. 6, Upper James'-street,
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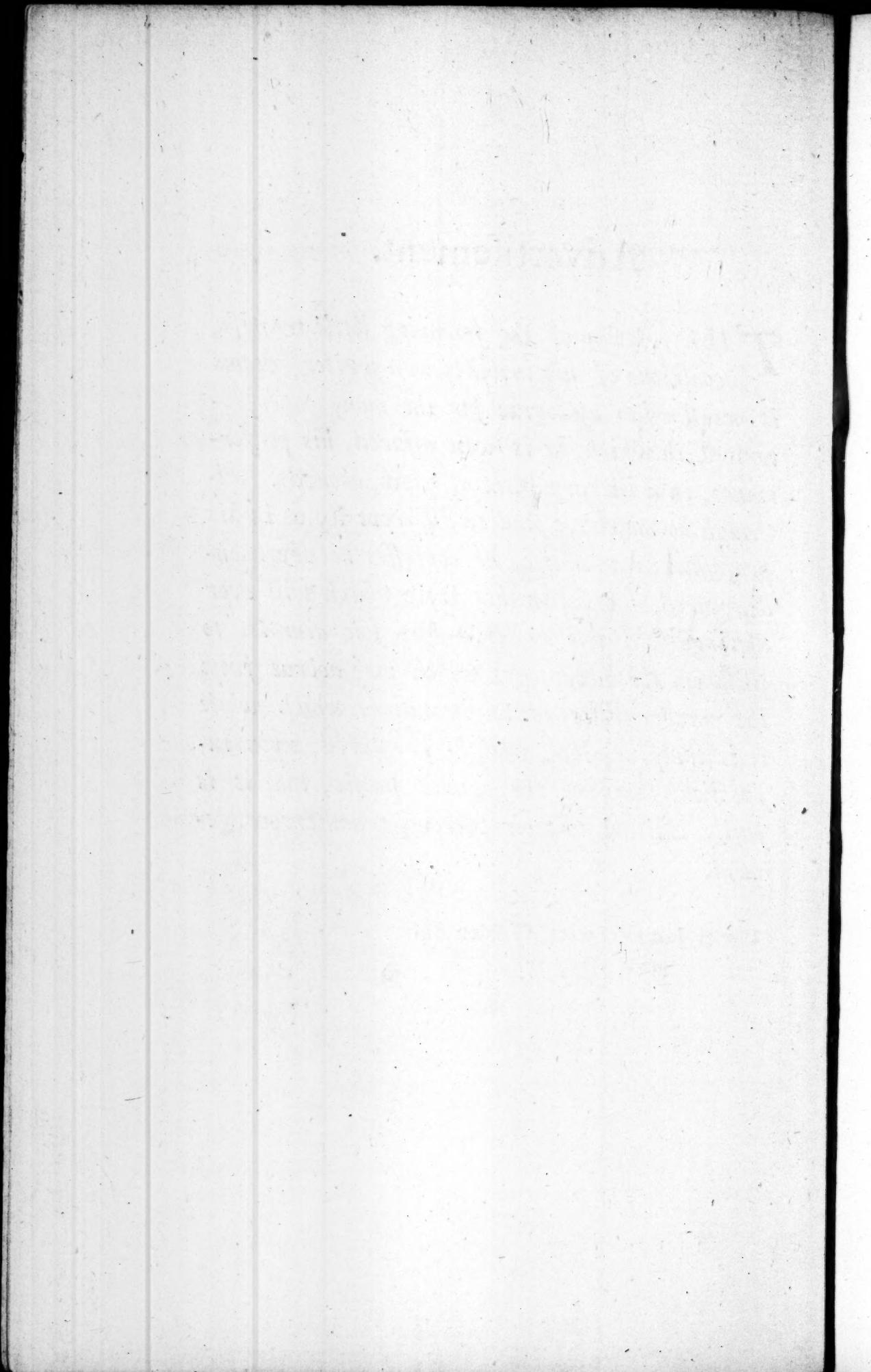


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THE Author of the following little treatise, conscious of his inability as a writer, deems it necessary to apologize for the many imperfections with which, he is well assured, his performance, in a literary point of view, abounds. Although he may have studied different styles in his profession as an artist, he confesses he never endeavoured to excel in that style which will ever distinguish a fine writer.—His sole aim is, to point out the advantages which may accrue from the encouragement of an invention, which while it is truly original, will, he is assured, upon inspection, convince the candid public, that it is justly intitled to their patronage and encouragement.

Upper James' Street, Golden Squ. }

26th May, 1784. }
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T R E A T I S E, &c.

PERHAPS no situation in life is more perplexing than that of the inventor of any art; but more especially, if that art happens to have even the distant appearance of clashing with the interests of those who may be employed in professions in any respect similar to the new undertaking.

It is on this account that the author of Polaplafiasmos continued in an undetermined state of mind for a considerable time; not knowing properly what method he ought to adopt in order to usher his invention into the world with that propriety which is necessary for the establishment of an art entirely new. This confession, candid as it is, will, he hopes,

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in some measure apologize for his thus troubling the public with this trifle.

When an artist is immersed in any particular pursuit, he very frequently may be called the *absent man*; and though he may have accomplished his aim, to the utmost extent of his wishes, yet his business is even then but partially performed; as he often meets with difficulties in the establishment of the art itself infinitely more perplexing, and harder to overcome, than any that occurred in the prosecution of his favourite study.

It seldom happens that fertility of invention and a great fortune unite in one person. Of course, many inventions must be lost to the world, either from the embarrassed circumstances of the inventor, or from his being destitute of the means for introducing his invention to the public in a light that is most eligible and conducive to its future success.

It is often the case too, that one man shall starve by an invention of great merit; while another shall build upon his ruins, and either from his interest in life, or his property, shall accumulate a fortune, though he may not execute the plan so well as the inventor would have

have done, had he been properly encouraged.

The inventor of this art, however, conscious that he has many difficulties to encounter, and that neither his interest nor his property might be powerful enough to cope with these difficulties, were he to confine his exertions to the circle of his friends, has been induced, upon mature deliberation, to throw *himself* and the *product* of many years labour at the feet of that impartial public, who alone are competent to determine on the merits of the invention. The advantages accruing to the subscribers he humbly presumes are many, and will be obvious to every unprejudiced admirer of the arts, as this invention comprehends all necessary perfection, and every pleasing requisite to the forming a cabinet of compleat highly finished pictures, and, of their kind, certainly original. The artist is determined, if the subscription fills, to confine the paintings to subscribers only ; the number of which is not to exceed one hundred ; and also, that not one picture shall be otherwise disposed of on any consideration whatever.

It may be observed by some people, that pictures of more consequence may be had, though at a greater expence. I grant this; but though these pictures may be of more intrinsic value with respect to the name and professional consequence of the master; yet they will neither be so neat, nor so highly finished. Besides, the subscribers to this plan will have pictures for about the twentieth part of the sum that is usually given for paintings as perfect in particulars as these will be; of course they will be accommodated with a choice collection of pure original paintings for a very trifling sum; which, until this discovery was made, few fortunes could attain to.

With respect to an idea prevailing that the paintings must be mere copies, I must observe, that they cannot be termed such with any propriety; especially when the subjects are designed on purpose for this work. Perfect coloured pictures will be produced by this manner of painting, though the design is only made in black, or a slight tinted drawing; and the pieces from such sketches will be as exquisitely painted, as if the subject was first laboriously finished upon a piece of canvas.

Further,

Further; as this invention consists of an entire new system of drawing and colouring, which is not subject to either change, cracking, peeling, or any other inconvenience which too frequently attend even first rate pictures painted in the usual manner, the productions of this invention must certainly be acknowledged original. In fact, this art is founded upon principles entirely new throughout; for with regard to every tint of colour, every oil varnish, or other article which the inventor makes use of in the process, he firmly believes that their respective qualities were never before known. The chymical investigation of each article has cost him the study of many years, and the closest application; and he is happy to say, that he is likely to be amply rewarded. As the manner of colouring and the method of drawing are likewise entirely new, the pictures painted in Pollaplasfasmos may, in this point of view, be considered with propriety as truly original as the first works done in oil, fresco, destemper, crayons, or water; and with respect to his method, he openly defies all Europe to produce any painting upon the same, or even similar principles; these pictures being done

on canvas, and painted of any size, from miniature to the largest and most different manner. In short, paintings in oil, crayons, or water colours, may all of them be exactly imitated.

The cheapness of these pictures, (a circumstance which the artist would wish to dwell on as being of considerable importance,) he is apprehensive will not in the least contribute toward removing certain prejudices which have crept into the minds of some individuals, who conceive that no picture can be really good, except it be the production of such a school, or that such a price be demanded for it that few persons can afford. From this supposed superiority which an original picture possesses in the esteem of many, the very idea of a copy, however excellent that copy may be, is so much lessened in its value in their eyes, that from this class I can expect but little encouragement; their notions being so confined, that they would willingly engross every pleasure to themselves; and consequently my plan, which is divided *into an hundred parts*, can never be relished by them.

People

People of this disposition frequently make use of this argument, that they would rather possess good prints than bad pictures—an idea which, if pursued, would prove of the greatest advantage to this art; as it may be certainly inferred, that *bad pictures* are almost equal to the *best prints*. For my own part, I would sooner have one *good print* than a collection of *bad paintings*; at least it would afford me more pleasure than a multitude of pictures without those essential requisites which constitute the perfection of the art.

This mode of argument, however, will not hold good upon a general comparison between pictures and prints; for if we consider the different degrees of perfection to be met with in the department of each, we must confess that paintings are infinitely superior to prints; and to elucidate this, we need only begin with the works of the first rate engravers, and trace the art to those charming embellishments which usually accompany the story of Jack the giant-killer, &c. These being the two extremes in the art of engraving, let us observe, on the other hand, that the very worst of paintings will always find a place as a piece of ornamental

mental furniture some where or other ; so indeed will the worst of prints ; but after a most servile use being made of them, they are frequently consigned to take possession of regions not very remarkable for gratifying any of the fine senses. This is at least a proof that the *worst paintings* are much preferable to the worst prints ; nay, that they are almost esteemed equal to the best, in this present rage for prints.

What laudable passion, for instance, are we to admire in the respective collectors of the works of the old and uncouth masters, which in general are without design, expression, composition, or indeed any thing to recommend them to the notice of persons of fine or of just ideas, except their antiquity ? There may be, I grant, sometimes very fine thoughts couched under a multitude of absurdities, useful enough for artists in their way, but by no means worthy of the attention of gentlemen, who ought to look out for, and encourage those perfections which now daily appear in the productions of our own school, which by most people of true judgment and taste is at this period pronounced equal, if not superior to any other in

in the world, as it is founded upon the beautiful and most perfect model of the antique—
a model which is certainly the most chaste,
noble, and pleasing of all others.

But the admirers of the prints here described are those who have no taste for pieces in colours at all; they affect to set but little value upon any print which consists of more than one colour; but where, in the name of common sense, do they imbibe their strange notion—From nature, which is the grand criterion and standard of propriety and taste?—No!—from certain mechanical ideas, which induce them to view with rapture the turnings and flourishes of the tool, while the grand design is in a great measure banished from their minds.

Men of this cast often make good tinkers, taylors, or blacksmiths, but very seldom arrive at any perfection in the arts or sciences, as they generally pay more attention to the gratification of the eye than the cultivation of the nobler faculties of the mind, and the contemplation of the beautiful productions of nature. Are those dots, stippling, strokes, and hatchets, which the graving tool produces, and which

these

these admirers of false taste so much admire, to be found in all-perfect nature? Surely these should never be regarded with more attention than any other part of the whole piece; as the merit of the subject does not ly in those parts of the work alone. These, it is true, are esteemed for the use they are of in representing a part of that pleasing scene which the painter may have chosen, viz. outline and shadow, and are confessedly necessary steps towards approaching nature; but in vain do we look for in any engraving the beautiful tints of flesh and blood, or that endless variety of colours which are so visible on the whole face of the creation.

The tyranny of custom has rendered engraving in a great measure agreeable to the eye, otherwise black prints would appear intolerable when compared with the productions of the pencil, with nature for its guide; constant use familiarizes things by degrees which were even of a monstrous appearance at first; but although prints assume the appearance of being natural through habit, they are never capable of exciting those pleasing sensations which constantly

stantly result from the contemplation of genuine nature.

Engraving may be compared to a metaphysical thought, which endeavours to form in imagination a living being, without a body or members. It is impossible that natural objects can be expressed with any degree of truth, without the assistance of a number of tints; and the nearer we approach to life in painting, the more satisfaction and real delight we afford the beholder. It is true, indeed, that *life and pure nature*, by some very great artists, are often called *insipid things*, not worth imitating, and from the *sublimity of their own ideas* they cannot submit to paint any thing *so vile or so common*; yet it is most probable these artists would find it a task of much greater difficulty to follow nature than to produce their own flights of fancy; and of course find in this argument a subterfuge to secure themselves from that public censure to which attempts at natural objects would too frequently expose them.

The incapacity of many artists to follow nature (the criterion of taste) is so very conspicuous, that he must be a novice indeed who

who cannot instantly perceive it: on this account, it must be more to the interest of such artists to pursue their own wild fancies, in order to please the whimsical and unnatural admirers of such productions, which are certainly *fine in their way*, though sometimes not very unlike those masterly touches to be seen on the walls of St. Luke's!

I will ask any person, if there is a single idea of any body, however extravagant, that does not originate from natural things, either in the whole or in different parts conjoined; for it is impossible for mortals to form something out of nothing; consequently every bright thought, every poetic flight of the greatest writers, must originate from nature; and all the aerial beings of a Shakespear or a Milton must be formed of parts which are first realized in nature, else they could not possibly find a way to the poet's fancy; those parts must consist of body, head, legs, arms, &c.; they must also be seen before they can be conceived; and when the system of nature is once understood, it is no very difficult task to make whatever monster you please out of the component parts! But this must be allowed not to be

be mending, but marring nature; such untimely progenies seldom giving pleasure, but most commonly disgust.

Such painters however are called geniuses by some would-be-connoisseurs, who think that Nature is *tame and paltry* when put in competition with their extravagancies; although every attitude, figure, feature, and expression must *first* be found in *Nature*. It is from the want of attention or conception, therefore, that so vile a choice is made, and that the beautiful parts of the creation are so shamefully neglected for such romantic trifles. Those artists, surely, by whom probability, or at least possibility, is not kept in view, can never please the sensible part of mankind; as it is impossible that romance and fiction can ever be so proper subjects for producing either pleasure or instruction, as those parts of history which are related with that truth consistent with natural occurrences in real life. It may be observed with some justice, that the extreme height of *poetic fancy* is the first step to *real phrenzy*. The enthusiast may, if he pleases, place his beautiful females in the clouds; but *mere mortals*, I believe, would rather have

them in an agreeable situation upon earth : at least people in general have a more perfect knowledge of beings in this world, than if they were quite out of their reach, and fixed upon a curling cloud, or suspended in the air. These may be deemed *very pretty fancies*, and may possibly please some people, as corresponding with their ideas of the sublime and beautiful in the art of painting ; but a subject from Sterne, Shakespeare, Thompson, or any other author, where the tale is probable, makes, in my humble opinion, a much deeper impression on the mind than any of these fanciful flights, which stand in need of the testimony of ocular demonstration to prove the certainty of their existence.

I should be much grieved, if what I have said concerning prints should appear illiberal or unjust ; I only wish to make such observations on the subject, as the nature of this new undertaking requires, in order to shield it as much as possible from the shafts of malevolence and detraction which are already prepared to be cast at it with all the force and phrenzy of enraged prejudice, which is ever prone to take the ill-natured side of the question.

tion. As many artists have already considered this invention as striking at the root of their different professions, such as engraving, mezzotinto scraping, picture dealing, painting, printselling, &c. I wish to be guarded as much as possible against this host of knights-errant, who have undoubtedly a right to preserve those laurels they have so nobly acquired by their industry and merit, but no right to depreciate an invention without so much as examining its merit, or knowing what it is capable of.

I cannot help observing, that while engravers affect to undervalue this art as a matter of no moment, they evidently discover their jealousy by the uncommon pains they take to depreciate it in the opinion of those who have taken a decided part in supporting the polite arts to the utmost of their power. As it is more immediately from this noble part of the community that the author of *Pollaplasiasmos* expects support, he has considered it as indispensably necessary to use the foregoing argument, as it is well known that some of these professional gentlemen have it much in their power from their important connections either to render the greatest services, or do the

greatest injuries to this invention, without speaking a single word against it. For instance, as most of the laudable admirers of painting, and patrons of the art, apply to a gentleman of the profession for his judgment upon the merit of a performance, nothing is more common than to shake the head, shrug up the shoulder, twist the nose, and with a disdainful look, or an ambiguous sneer, absolutely do more injury to a performance than by openly pointing out its faults. And what renders this silent censure the severer, it is generally considered as truly liberal, and the worthy patron is induced to reason in this manner : "Oh ! I perceive he is too generous to speak his sentiments for fear of hurting an artist ; but I clearly discern what his opinion is." — This I do not wish to offer as a general charge. I am certain there are many good men in every department of the arts, who are greatly above such little actions ; and I am also aware, that there are also many gentlemen who are capable of judging for themselves, without consulting any person's opinion.

Notwithstanding what I have advanced respecting prints, I must ingenuously confess that

that I think them very pleasing articles; and when executed by a Woollett, a Strange, or a Bartolozzi, ought to have, and I hope ever will have, their distinct admirers. But yet prints are not calculated for furniture equal to paintings; for those very beauties for which they are so remarkable, are in a great measure lost when framed, glazed, and disposed as ornaments for rooms, &c. The delicate touch of the tool has no longer an enchanting effect, when placed at any distance from the eye; consequently engravings are certainly better in port folios than in any other situation, as their respective admirers will find it much easier to descant upon their several beauties in that situation than if they were otherwise disposed.

Even attempting to introduce a variety of colours in prints, in order to make a subject more like a painting, is destroying those beauties which we have already mentioned, without approaching one step nearer the semblance of nature, as nature can never be properly expressed but by a *local body of colour*.

The art of engraving has ever been looked upon as an acquisition of ingenuity, and it is, doubtless, particularly useful in many businesses;

ses ; but while we admire its greatest merit, we cannot but lament its total incapacity for giving any semblance of that rich glow of colouring for which the Venetian school is so much celebrated. The immense sums which are paid for the *real works* of a Rubens or a Vandycke, clearly demonstrate the great importance of colouring, and that no piece can be called truly excellent without the strictest adherence to this essential requisite. It is not in the nature of a print to represent the true bloom of a peach, or the colour of a rose.

“ So glow’d the grape, so perfect the deceit,
 “ My hand reach’d forward ere I found the
 “ cheat.”

In short, it is unnecessary to add more on this head, when we contemplate the beautiful colouring in the landscapes of a Claude Lorrain ; whose works are so universally esteemed, that a single landscape will sell for two or three thousand pounds; and that this value chiefly arises from a happy combination of rich natural colours, with little assistance either from the grand design of a Michael Angelo,

Angelo, or the picturesque expression of the divine Raphael.

I should never have introduced engraving, nor offered any remarks upon its imperfections, had it not been for the very illiberal expressions of some artists in that line, whose narrow contracted ideas will not suffer them to admit of the least merit in any department of the arts, that has the most remote tendency to encroach upon any branch of that profession. These remarks I have therefore thrown out as retorts to those sarcasms which they have so abundantly bestowed upon this invention—sarcasms which would have been treated with the contemptuous silence they deserved, had not that silence implied a consciousness of want of merit in the invention itself.

I shall now proceed in as concise a manner as possible to point out the extensive and lasting advantages which may accrue to the public by the encouragement of Pollaplasfiasmos.

It must be obvious to every person of discernment, that painting as an art contributes much to the grandeur and consequence of a nation; and the encouragement of the ornamental branch of that art would doubtless prove

a source

a source of national wealth, were it possible in its present improved state, to lessen the expence attending it. This invention, however, obviates, in a great measure, every objection that can be urged against the general introduction of pleasing ornaments; and the cheapness of the articles will enable the inventor to supply even those countries with ornaments where painting is in its greatest perfection.

For want of something to please the eye, the cieling and other parts of buildings have been constantly decorated with plaster-work, carving, gilding, maché, fillagréé, Chinese, and India paper. These articles are not only very expensive, but discover a littleness of mind in the possessor; there being seldom either sense or meaning in them; and instead of proving an ornament to a house, they only discover a vitiated taste by aiming at elegance in the use of such tawdry embellishments.

Nor does real grandeur consist in a profusion of gold and glitter; as such work can never affect the mind; for the eye is never more pleased than when the mind partakes of the same sensation. Among the different species of ornament, historical paintings not only claim

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the preference, but are attended with many peculiar advantages: 1st, The eye is pleased with the colours of nature, and the mind must receive satisfaction, if the subject is happily chosen. 2d, Striking subjects displayed with propriety prove so many useful lessons to youth; they speak in all languages, and the tale is understood at once by the whole world. 3dly, Every meritorious action may be forcibly described, and the hero or the philosopher handed down with admiration to future ages.—Just and striking remarks may also instill in the minds of the rising generation, a noble ardour to emulate those virtues which are thus celebrated by the pencil. They have also a tendency to improve the morals of youth, and to humanize and polish the mind—advantages in themselves great and lasting, and which no other species of ornament is in the least calculated to affect.

It must afford pleasure to every lover of the arts to reflect that real grandeur in design, and elegance of execution, are no longer strangers to this kingdom. One of the noblest instances of this we have in the building and embellishments of the Royal Academy. There

true elegance and splendor are exhibited without a superfluity of carving, gilding, or any *Chinese paper*. Those ceilings are truly noble, beautiful, and pleasing; and only require to be more public, to render the manner and taste there displayed more followed, and more universally admired.

The execution of such magnificent ceilings is attended, it is true, with very considerable expence in the common mode of painting; but by the invention of pollaplastasmos, the proprietor is enabled to ornament apartments at about the twentieth part of the sum that such productions must cost from the hand of a master, at the same time in as perfect and high finished a manner in every particular. By this means, what was before only within reach of a few individuals, may now be attained by thousands; and nearly at the same expence as common ornaments. Thus a new branch of busines, and a new branch of commerce may, by proper encouragement, be set afoot in this country, which no other nation can boast of, or even claim the least pretension to.

It will appear very evident, with regard to ornaments, that in all civilized countries where religious principles do not prohibit the use of pictures, painting has ever been upheld at an enormous expence; but more so, when interwoven with religion itself.

Of late years, we may with truth assert, that this kingdom, with respect to the flourishing state of the arts, is not in the least behind the first places in Italy. In landscapes and portraits, no place can equal us; and as to historical pieces, they have been held in such estimation, that many attempts were made at different periods to render them more numerous by multiplying them in natural colours.

Tapestry, I believe, was one of the first attempts to commemorate historic facts in colours; and even now, it is justly allowed to be a grand invention. Many noble designs have been executed upon this plan; and no expence was spared, in order to arrive at perfection in this magnificent style of imitation. Even amidst the reigning taste, which is very opposite to this kind of furniture, it must be allowed, that there is a grandeur in tapestry

which commands our admiration much beyond the lifeless embellishments of stucco and plaster, or any other mode of ornamenting rooms now in use. Beside, the variety of pleasing scenes depicted on these hangings, will ever render them delightful and entertaining. As a proof of what I have advanced, let any person only view the truly capital pieces of tapestry now in the possession of Lord Foley, and they will, I am persuaded be entirely of my opinion. The principal reason for the disuse of tapestry is the great expence in procuring any that is excellent. Few fortunes, in fact, could afford to purchase it, consequently it can never become general. An inferior sort was lately substituted in its place, which having little to recommend it beside its colours, became disgusting, and consequently was disused.

The next attempt at multiplying copies of pictures, was by the art of engraving, and printing in *chiaro oscuro*, first practised by Albert Durer, Hugo di Carpi, and others. They published a number of prints in colours, in order to imitate the tints of the respective masters. But this branch of the arts declined soon

soon after their time, as there was a difficulty in managing the tints which very few understood; so that this of course became neglected, and by degrees was in a great measure lost. The same art was endeavoured to be revived about forty years ago in this kingdom by a Mr. Jackson, who established a manufactory at Battersea for the purpose of ornamenting rooms with paper-hangings of this description. But this gentleman died at the time he was attempting to establish it, and the art again in a great measure expired with him. It was never after made general; nor do I think it capable of any great degree of perfection.

About this time also, a Mr. Le Blond introduced a method of printing pictures in colours from mezzotinto plates. These were certainly very good of their kind; but the great expence attending the preparation of the plates, &c. considerably enhanced the price to purchasers; and though they were much esteemed at that time, yet they were nothing more than prints in colours on paper, and could never be considered in any other light by any person of judgment.

Within

Within these last twenty years, several other methods have been tried, in order to make a species of pictures by the use of mezzotinto prints, as the back paintings on glass. But this is an art so very trifling in its nature, that little can be said respecting its ingenuity.

Another method has also been practised something similar to painting on glass, as it is called. This is effected by making prints transparent with varnish, painting the back of the prints, and then cementing them on a piece of canvas, in order to make them pass for fine paintings. In many instances this deceit has been practised with success; but of late the people of this country are become better judges than to suffer so gross an imposition to prevail.

I have enlarged upon these trifling articles, in order to shew the propensity that has prevailed, since the introduction of the fine arts, in imitating Nature in a greater degree than prints are capable of in one colour only. This is a proof, too, that mankind have been conscious that there was a *something* wanting;—that pictures have more truth and nature in them than any other of the imitative arts; and, that

that in fact, nothing has been wanting but a method of rendering them of more easy purchase, to bring them into more general use.

This great defect is now supplied by the discovery of the art in question; both as it will enable purchasers to form a capital collection at a small expence, and as the art itself possesses all the necessary and essential parts of painting, in every style and manner of the most able and celebrated masters, either ancient or modern; from the neat precise finishing of a Denner, or a Vanderweriff, to the bold masterly touches of a Michael Angelo.

Perhaps it may not be deemed improper in this place to offer a few observations on those requisites which constitute the value or real merit of particular pieces of painting, as well as point out some of the most attracting beauties of this elegant art, in order to demonstrate the great benefits that will accrue to those who may become its promoters and encouragers.

There is no manner, now in common use, of producing (unless with the most exquisite pains and trouble) a smooth neat picture, with finishing and colouring, precise and proper in

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all its parts. As nothing but labour and the closest application can possibly effect this, such pictures are advanced to so great a price, that few people can afford to purchase them; indeed, highly finished pictures are seldom to be met with at all. By this new method of drawing and colouring, however, these beauties will be introduced in all the small pictures; it being certainly the only style which is immediately calculated for cabinet-pieces. The prices now given for the finished paintings of the Flemish masters sufficiently evince the value of these articles. From this consideration, also, the author of Pollaplasfasmos humbly presumes that he will receive the countenance of the patrons of the arts, as pictures will be produced by him for a mere trifle, possessed of that degree of elegance, neatness of execution, and in that highly finished state which cannot be equalled but by an immensity of labour in a first-rate artist.

Some great judges have lately attempted to undervalue highly finished pieces, and have insinuated that time is thrown away in this minute work. Such an expression, I believe, has often been made use of by painters themselves,

selves, but seldom by purchasers or collectors. When a painter happens to be a collector, he may express himself in these terms; but in purchasing, he generally pursues another plan; for though the strong, bold, masterly strokes may please his fancy, the neat, clear, and delicate handling will soonest reach his purse, provided the drawing is equally good. It requires, I allow, some judgment to determine exactly what degree of finishing is necessary for pictures in general; but the size of each piece and their respective situations will certainly decide that point. It is of the greatest consequence to attend to this particular, as all large pictures ought to be viewed at a certain distance, and the proper force of colouring apportioned to that distance. By placing a small picture at too great a distance from the eye, the high finishing may then with some propriety be deemed *loss of time*. This remark is equally applicable to the disposing of engravings to the best advantage.

As to small cabinet pictures, there is a necessity for their being highly finished, and they must be arranged accordingly; for in the neatness and smoothness of a small work, its prin-

cipal excellency consists. To attempt to discover beauties in the bold daubing of a small picture, it will be necessary sometimes to exercise some of the principles which are adopted by those great judges of painting who never look at any picture, great or small, without putting on the wise man's *wink*, to soften the hard parts of the picture, and make it more agreeable to the eye. Possibly, the necessity of peeping through the hand might be prevented, were the picture properly finished on the easel at first.—It is very common for numbers to put on this *wink of wisdom*, who I believe could see better without it. It is true, that forming an aperture with the hand, and looking through it, has at least some appearance of judgment; and to keep up this shew, is sometimes of no small consequence. I cannot help thinking, that the admirers of strong rough pictures are, in general, men of *enlarged ideas*, and frequently possessed of the wonderful talent of making portraits in the fire, or forming fanciful landscapes upon old broken walls, or any other place where there happens to be an assemblage of spots and blotches.—I am informed that a person of

Birmingham

Birmingham acquired a considerable fortune by indulging a similar turn of mind.—He was so well convinced of the prevalence of this taste, that he established an academy for the purpose of promoting this style of colouring, and of producing pictures for the exercise of Fancy. These pictures were dispatched by placing five different colours at hand, dipping the ends of the fingers and thumb in these colours, transmitting them to the lid of a snuff-box, and then splashing the colours into confusion by striking them with the palm of his hand. Thus was the picture painted, excepting a few masterly touches which were to be given by that greatest of all artists Fancy.

I cannot help observing, that through the force and prevalence of Fashion, our judgment is so bewildered, and our taste so depraved, we frequently overlook Misfortune, her counsin-german, though possessed of infinite more merit, and leave her to starve in some miserable place or other, from the circumstance of her not being so well dressed. The name of that Billingsgate, Fancy, on the other hand, is echoed and re-echoed with so much vociferation, that the deluded multitude run with ea-

ger strides to her temple, without being able to account for the secret impulse that hurries them thither.

Every thing in fact, that is not consistent with natural occurrences may be called Fashion, as may be observed by that endless variety of gewgaws which is produced every year under the banners of this inconstant strumpet.

Let any person, for instance, only reflect on the multitude of whims that have taken place in the article of dress, since the monstrous ruff of Queen Bess to the balloon frippery of 1784, and the power and charms of Fashion will be sufficiently exemplified; and yet, I dare aver, that the stiff ruff was as agreeable to the eye in those days, as any of our most fashionable ornaments of dress are at this present moment.

In dress, and in many other articles, there may be some apology offered, I allow, for the innovations of Fancy—perhaps they may be necessary. But the introduction of unnatural fancy in the fine arts, where one uniform standard or criterion of taste ought to prevail, however diversified and innumerable the designs may be, is unpardonable in any artist, even admitting that that artist could unite in his

his own person all the beauties of the first-rate masters.

I am confident that, upon enquiry, it will be found that the greatest part of our pretended taste originates in Fashion ; and I am sorry to observe that the polite art of painting should be so much governed by its influence.—The true import of the phraze *good effect*, indefinite as it is considered, I would thus describe : one person admires the good effect of that *bright picture*; another adores the beautiful effect of this *dark one*; a third is enchanted with the warm effect of the *brown tint* of this master ; and another with the cool transparent colouring of that ; until Madam Fashion steps forward, gives her judgment upon the matter, and settles the point at once. At one time she persuades her votaries, (for they seldom believe their own eyes), that black is white, or that white is black ; and at another time, contrary to what she herself had formerly asserted, that the silver tints of this master ought to be preferred to the dark gloomy colouring of that.

It is perhaps not much to the credit of the art of painting, that we have lived to see, and
but

but a few years, too, after its establishment in this country, fashionable painters as well as fashionable milliners ; and that that which is in the highest estimation to-day, shall be despised to-morrow. The grand rule which every painter ought to follow, is closely to follow Dame Nature ; and he who comes nearest to her, is undoubtedly the best painter, whether he has a *fashionable manner* of handling his pencil or not ; or whether his touches are like a Raphael's, or a Ruben's. In short, it is a matter of small moment, at least in regard to manner, whether his pencil be free or confined, or whether he paints with his right hand, or with his left. The grand effect consists in an adherence to truth ; if he attains this, he attains the highest degree of perfection any artist is capable of.

In accomplishing this desirable end, neither the touch of one master or another ought to be regarded, as it is scarcely possible to find an article in nature to correspond exactly with the pencil strokes or touches of any master, however great ; therefore the variety of styles are all fancy or fashion, and admired accordingly.

It

It is too frequently the case, that not the semblance of Nature, but the *manner* of the artist, attracts admiration. Those painters who study *this effect*, may justly be deemed triflers with Nature; and there must be some reference to the touches of the *Birmingham genius*, before a person can realize in his mind what is intended by some of their works. Yet it so happens, that if an artist obtains a *name*, these very paintings shall be deemed *invaluable*.—One even of our first-rate artists is led away by this method of trifling. It is scarcely possible, from the confusion of the touches upon the face of his pictures, to divine their meaning, upon a close inspection. In order to be convinced of their merits, a proper distance must be observed; for the moment the *ignis fatuus* is approached, whilk! 'tis gone! and nothing remains but a few *splashes of the pencil*, which a moment before had the appearance of a *flock of sheep*: then step a few yards back, and they re-appear.

No one can admire these beauties, at least in one respect, more than I do; and they are undoubtedly *pretty touches* to play upon the fancy; more especially when the scenery is truly

truly pleasing as the landscapes of this master generally are : but still it is a defect ; for it is impossible that they will continue of the same value in the succeeding age, or bear the least comparison with the exquisite pictures of a Claude Lorraine, where all that precise finishing is observed which is so conducive to a just expression of natural objects, that are as variable as they are numerous, and as happily conceived as they are delineated.

I must here be permitted to make a few observations, which I hope will not be deemed impertinent, respecting the conduct of some of the first artists in this country, who have adopted this flight-of-hand method for the sake of dispatch ; and who have been constantly pointing out the great beauties of those masterly flourishes, as they are termed ; though they themselves, upon their outset in life, were as careful and diligent as possible in their paintings, and took the greatest pains to finish them with the utmost exactness. When Dame Fortune, however, took them by the hand, and introduced them to the goddes Fashion, they were whispered that great labour was no longer of advantage. Accordingly they assumed

sumed a careless, negligent, though *fashionable* manner—which *fashionable manner* they themselves, for very evident purposes, commended. Now it was, (and it been the constant practice in every age), that through the patronage of this powerful protectress Fashion, they played off trick upon trick, till they puffed themselves into general esteem: this once accomplished, the stranger their works appeared, the more they were admired; and the more their manner deviated from the common mode, the less judgment could be formed of it by a nation among whom the art of painting had just begun to dawn. Thus supported by the sounding of a name, every absurd and fanciful dash of the pencil designed to pass for pearls or diamonds, proved nearly as valuable to the painter as if he had realized, not imitated, those costly ornaments. But were these licences taken by any artist who has not the advantage of a name, at the least they would be considered as unpardonable negligences; though much oftener termed vile horrid stuff! abominable trash! while on the other hand, a name once established, it is great, wonderful, masterly, and enchanting!

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Thus,

Thus, by this species of letters patent, quakery of any sort may be vended: it matters not in what form the nostrum is administered, provided the doctor can only persuade the patient to swallow it.

I would by no means insinuate, that these observations can, with any degree of justice, be applied to *every* artist who has acquired a name. They are only meant to point out the negligence of some of our first-rate painters, and to serve as a spur to them in preserving their reputation. I am assured that no person ever yet acquired the character of a great artist without first distinguishing himself in a very different style from that which I have now mentioned.

However the bulk of mankind may be thus imposed on, certain it is, that real judges soon discover the deceit; and although an artist may through uncommon industry, and great merit, rank with the first in the profession, no apology can be offered for relaxing in his attention to that public who have raised him to eminence, and opulence. He makes a poor return indeed, if he attempts to vitiate their taste; and a worse excuse, if he has nothing

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to offer in his justification, by presenting them with hasty and incorrect pieces, than a regard to his own ease, and self-interested motives.

Besides these masters ought to recollect that in regard to their pupils, their honour is concerned, and the interests of the profession are at stake: it can be no advantage to them to be witnesses to a loose and an incorrect style passing current as a capital picture, when we consider the propensity of a pupil to catch at every stroke of his master right or wrong. In short, an artist, in this predicament, is under the necessity of conniving at, if not approving those very errors which he must be conscious have originated with himself.

In fact, as nature herself is unalterable, so there must be a *standard* for the *style in painting*. Whatever change, therefore, takes place, it must be the effect of whim or caprice; but the encouragement which may attend a deviation from nature, can never stamp *that deviation* sterling. It is owing to this, that the designs of great masters will flourish for ever, while carving, gilding, and gew-gaw embellishments, will be lost in the admiration of the moment.

It may be averred, that the predominancy of whim and fancy operate much to the decline of true taste; but it does not follow that whim *ought not* to be encouraged. The great matter, however, is never to permit fancy to usurp the throne of reality. Let her be kept in her proper station as *nature's foil*.

Perhaps some will observe, that this island by the encouragement of the invention in question, will be *over-run with paintings*. Let such recollect how this country continues to be duped by the *pretended paintings* of the first masters in the *foreign schools*. A fair opportunity now offers for abolishing this traffic; and the inventor is assured that his countrymen will enable him to avail himself of it.

If painting ever declines in this country, it must proceed from a vitiated taste in the artists, more than from want of proper encouragement. It is a moral certainty, that the flourishing state of every business is always concomitant with professional excellence; and nothing is clearer than that purchasers are created by works of genius and taste, and constantly multiplied from a communication of the ideas that inspire the poet and the painter.

painter. Beside, will any one dispute that this kingdom is only in an infant state with respect to the arts; of course it is to be hoped there are many years to come, before there can be any propriety in the above observation.

I am naturally led on this occasion to make some remarks on original pictures, and the disgrace bad paintings are justly fallen into. I trust the admirers of painting will not think it an impertinent digression, if it shall appear to contain some necessary hints to those worthy patrons of the arts, who are, or may hereafter be inclined to make a collection of these pleasing articles.

About sixteen or eighteen years ago, a particular fashion and rage prevailed for pictures; but none passed current, unless those which by some means or other were stamped with the recommendatory title of *original*. The number of purchasers at that time far exceeding the pictures executed by the capital artists, recourse was had to *copying* the most favourite pieces to be met with, on the continent; some of which were tolerable, others as bad as possible to bear the least resemblance to the master

ter from which they were taken. These copies were brought over by the different dealers, and held forth as originals ; and purchasers were soon found, who paid a price according to the scarcity or apparent age of the picture. By this means, in a little time the kingdom was in possession of a number of bad copies, which were hastily executed, in order to take advantage of the raging taste of the times. Thus commission upon commission was given by the nobility and gentry, in order to obtain a choice collection of pictures. But this laudable taste, was shamefully abused by a combination of dealers, who took every advantage to play into each other's hands, by giving a false testimony of the real value of the pieces that were most unsaleable.

In consequence of this, several worthy patrons of the art began to find their generosity abused ; and upon close examination of the intrinsic worth of their respective collections, many of the pictures were found to consist of very trifling performances, totally inconsistent with their design of forming a collection.

Numbers of gentlemen now began to judge for themselves. They could not bear the idea
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of such preposterous impositions: soon, therefore, did they dismantle their rooms of this trash, and turned their thoughts to the encouragement of the English school. Hence arose, however, that stigma which is still fixed on copies in general; and indeed many of the pictures alluded to were so bad, that nothing but the consummate assurance of some of the traders in that branch, could possibly have forced upon any gentleman. The name of Michael Angelo was frequently hacknied about, and affixed to these bold daubs, until his supposed works were as common to be met with in some parts of the country, as the famous works of the Lancashire Tim Bobbin. Nay, some time after, it was no uncommon thing to see a large daub stuck up at an inn, or common ale-house, contiguous to the seat of some gentleman. The landlord was asked what that piece was, and where he had it from. "O! (replied he) I had it from the Hall House of John the butler; it is painted by one Claudey Lowrain:" or if it happened to be an historical piece, it was generally painted by one "Ralf Ale, a wonderful great mon."

Thus

Thus were the names of the first Italian masters daily prostituted, and indiscriminately affixed to multitudes of the vilest daubs that ever disgraced the pencil. It is not therefore surprising that copies should fall into dispute, at least such as have been mentioned: on the other hand, copies of merit still maintained their ground, and ever will have their admirers.—So common was the name of the immortal Raphael, at the period I allude to, that were only the best pictures in Europe which now pass for his, collected together, the number would be so great, that had Raphael lived two centuries, and been a miracle for expedition, the period would have been too short for executing them; and not only is this remark applicable to him, but to several other admired masters. As a proof of this, I need only observe, that it is well known as an incontrovertible fact, that Raphael's time was chiefly taken up with the pieces at the Vatican, the famous cartoons, now at the Queen's palace, and but a few other capital pictures. It is now partly determined by the first judges, that there is not a single eazel picture of Raphael's in this kingdom; though we have several

veral exquisite copies of this master, which perhaps greatly exceed the painting of that great genius.—Design and colouring seem to me rather opposite departments, at least it is generally the case; and a man of Raphael's fertile invention would hardly waste his precious time, it is to be supposed, in doing that part of the business in which he could be so easily assisted by others. We may therefore conclude, that we have but very few things immediately from his own hand.

In fact, the same remark may be applied to many other eminent Italian masters.

I apprehend when this subject is attended to, we shall not find a third part of the fine pictures in this kingdom which are deemed originals, that really are so: yet many of them are, perhaps, much beyond what the masters to whom they are imputed were ever capable of performing with colours.

Design is the soul of true genius, and the application of colour a mechanical acquisition, to which, by assiduity, men of very moderate abilities may easily attain; a circumstance of which all the masters whose works are numerous most assuredly took advantage.

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I hope

I hope it will not be deemed improper if I endeavour, by a few observations, to point out some of the enormous disproportions conspicuous in a work well known to be the production of Rubens, at least the invention of that great man; I mean the ceiling at Whitehall. Are the figures there drawn with that truth which any one would expect from such a name? Certainly not. The preposterous children that he has made, cannot be considered consistent with the truth of nature, or the beautiful parts of the antique. In short, there are but few of the female figures that can with any propriety be called tolerable; and yet there are some wonderful beauties in the performance. The fore shortenings are truly capital; and if we consider the whole together, it is certainly a grand piece of work, but by no means perfect. Observe, by way of contrast, the ceilings in Somerset House, and there we may perceive executed by the hands of a West, a Kauffman, a Cypriani, and a Sir Joshua Reynolds, all those enchanting graces that at once captivate the mind, and warm the imagination; in short, a combination of those wonderful beauties which constitute

stitute the antique, and that are so consistent with the most perfect parts of nature. For harmony of parts, and those bewitching proportions which so powerfully affect the mind of the true genius, I suppose it is not to be equalled in the world.

In this kingdom, artists of the first talents are now to be found in almost every branch of the polite arts; and it may be said with propriety that we are almost what Athens once was, in respect to this magnificent branch of national greatness, those negligences excepted, which with all deference I have pointed out.

But a cloud of an ominous nature overspreads the brilliancy of these acquirements, when we reflect on the departure of Zoffani and Angelica Kauffman; the latter possessing a soul as perfect as Raphael, the former capable of producing a colouring in the highest style, and, for finishing his work, inferior to few of the Flemish schools. What perfection might we not expect, were two such artists to unite their talents in one picture? But we still have artists who have ability to invent, and assiduity to execute. Witness those truly great pictures of Mr. Copley's, the Deaths of Lord Chat-

ham and of Major Pierson. The first of these is, perhaps, the greatest performance of the kind, that this or any other country can boast of.—Most of the pictures of Mr. West, too, are of this description ; I mean natural, well finished pictures, with all those pleasing properties which stamp a lasting value upon a work.

However we may regret the loss of a Kauffman and a Zoffani, we are in some measure compensated by the astonishing pencil of a Barry, whose genius and exertions are so united, that his works may be deemed truly valuable, and he himself esteemed an honour to this country, and an ornament to that institution, which is so laudably founded for the most noble of all purposes, the improvement of arts, manufactures, and commerce.

The author of *Pollaplafiasmos* flatters himself that he shall meet with the indulgence of that Society, which has so eminently distinguished itself in many parts of the world, by liberally supporting their institution upon the most extensive principles. As this invention may be entitled to some share of their patronage, he relies on the candour of that Society for

for such countenance and encouragement, as the respective members may think the inventor deserving of, or they may be disposed to give.

The utility of this invention, provided it meets with public encouragement, will be far more extensive than can be conceived in a cursory point of view. The plan includes a variety of departments, and will lay a foundation for the establishment of a new manufactory. It will be a repository of paintings, from which the curious may furnish their cabinets. The public may be supplied too with articles appropriated to the purposes of ornaments for ceilings, hangings for rooms, &c. in which last branches, many indigent children may be employed, and thus may the institution serve, in several respects, as an asylum to honest industry.

I have already hinted, that I am aware this new undertaking will be exposed to much censure, as having a tendency to obstruct the progress of the art of painting, as well as affect the interests of artists. But such censure will appear ill founded, when it is considered that by the aid of this new art, the beauties of

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the several masters will be rather improved than diminished, and that in the very particular and striking instances of colouring. The effect the art of engraving has upon that of design, is undeniably admitted. Upon the same principle it will be rendered apparent, that this invention instead of injuring, will promote the art of painting, by displaying the peculiar excellencies of masters, and by tracing their analogy to each other. In short, this art may be considered as being in every respect *that* to painting, which engraving is to design.

It may be a matter of surprize to some people, that a patent is not immediately taken out for an invention of such a promising nature. Suffice it to observe, that at present, it is incompatible with the interests of the art, as by the tenor of that instrument, the author would be under the necessity of disclosing the particulars, or his patent could be of no effect. It has already been remarked, that this invention is not so well calculated for an extensive trade in this country, as it is in some other kingdoms; particularly in those parts where religion gives a sanction to the use of pictures.

There

There the art must flourish ; as far at least as it relates to sacred history. Indeed, for this cause, painting in many countries may be more properly termed a necessary trade than an ornamental profession. This art may be also rendered subservient to singular advantages in this particular, as the inventor is assured that there are several people from the continent, now in this metropolis, who expect a patent to be taken out ; when a specification would furnish them with information necessary to enable them to carry the invention out of the kingdom, and establish it for the above mentioned purposes.

Hence it appears, that by prematurely taking out a patent, the persons above alluded to would have derived that advantage which this mode of publishing is intended to prevent. Farther, by confining these pictures to a small number, they are kept more in reserve, and the art consequently less liable to be purloined.

From these, and other circumstances, it is almost become proverbial, that men of great invention are seldom rich men. Though this description of men have contributed extensively

ly to every convenience and every comfort in life, yet it is no uncommon thing for individuals to acquire fortunes at the inventor's expence, by obtaining a knowledge of the art in a clandestine manner; while the inventor is left a prey to indigence and distress.

To what cause this is imputable, it is difficult to determine: probably it is owing to an omission in the projector, who through close attention to his art alone, neglects the proper means of introducing it in a proper manner to public notice. For it must be acknowledged, that in this country, where humanity and justice prevail in an eminent degree, real merit, when known, has always met with the most liberal protection and support.

Actuated by this consideration, the author of Pollaplafiasmos lately refused a very advantageous offer made by a foreign power, in order to induce him to carry this art out of the kingdom, and establish it in a place where he was assured of the greatest success.—But no terms can induce him to leave his native country, in expectation of the patronage and protection of foreigners; more especially as he is well assured he will be amply rewarded

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in throwing himself, for support in his undertaking, on that candour and liberality which have ever been the characteristic of Britons.

He has already received the most flattering proof of the justness of his sentiments on this head, on an application made above a year ago to one of the first men the world has produced in his line. Suffice it to say, that Sir Joshua Reynolds, with a protecting hand, generously assisted him in his invention in a manner truly great and noble, and which evinced his liberality of soul both as a man and as an artist;—a grateful sense of which can never be obliterated from the mind of the inventor. Mr. West, too, with a mind much superior to professional prejudices, indulged the artist with the use of one of his pictures,—from which he has taken the first piece which he dares submit to the inspection of the public; numbers of former productions having been laid aside, from the many improvements which the art has undergone within this last year.

When an art entirely new is introduced to the public, numbers of critical observers take a pleasure in pointing out every little defect and error that they can possibly discern, merely

ly for the sake of shewing their profound judgment. This is undoubtedly a mortifying consideration to the inventor of this art ; being conscious that his first productions are less able to stem the tide of censure than his future works will be. He therefore humbly begs leave to present his infant art to the fostering hand of that worthy part of the community whose benevolent dispositions lead them—to judge without rashness—to encourage merit without prejudice, and—to give a sanction to whatever is laudable or ingenious.

ENUMERATION

ENUMERATION of the *Advantages*
arising from the *Encouragement of*
POLLAPLASIAMSOS.

THE inventor, conscious that in his attempt to obtain the patronage of the Public, he will have many prejudices to encounter, submits, with diffidence, the following advantages, among many others that might be enumerated, which attend this invention. If, however, they should appear exaggerated, he will endeavour to satisfy the candid and the liberal enquirer of the truth of his assertions.

I. THAT the principal beauty of this art consists in preserving the stile and the masterly colouring of the greatest artists in their genuine and natural taste.

II. IT cannot with propriety be termed copying; as a copy may retain faults, but be devoid of the excellencies of the original. This invention, on the contrary, presents the *second Self* of the original; and at a proper

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distance, while it will deceive almost the nicest eye, upon a closer inspection, will be found to possess a neatness of execution, and a degree of softness not to be attained but from an immensity of labour in a first-rate artist.

III. THAT his pictures on canvas may be afforded as cheap as fine engravings.

IV. THAT his paintings will all be of equal goodness, the last not inferior to the first.

V. THAT any subject, when once undertaken, will be ready for delivery in the course of a few months.

VI. THAT the original pictures of the most esteemed masters may by this art be preserved for ever; and as the inventor has discovered the art of fixing his colours, he is able to imitate and preserve the appearance of age in an old picture, or give the fresh and lively tints of new ones, without the possibility of variation in the copy.

VII. THAT if the invention is properly encouraged, it may enable this nation to supply all Europe with pictures; while the famous collectors on the Continent, instead of sending pictures to England, may be supplied by us.

PROPOSALS

FOR THE SUBSCRIPTION.

THAT a collection of truly original pictures shall be painted by J. BOOTH, No. 6.
Upper James'-street, Golden square.

That one hundred of each subject shall be painted, and no more.

That the first subject shall be—*Jupiter and Europa*, which will be delivered on the 1st of August, 1784.

This picture may now be inspected as above, gratis, as a specimen of the art.

That a separate subscription shall be opened for each picture.

That

That the price of the present specimen, *Jupiter and Europa*, will be THREE GUINEAS.

That each subscriber shall have one picture delivered at the expiration of two months from the time of subscribing.

That no money shall be paid until the pictures are delivered.

28th May, 1784.

* * Any nobleman or gentleman having a favourite portrait or other picture, and who wishes to have exact copies of them in the genuine style of the originals, may have any number of them above Ten executed at a very moderate expence.

ERRATA.—P. 14, l. 1, for—admire, read, esteem.

P. 41, l. 4, for—it been, read, it has been.

20 JY 64

T H E E N D.

